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A  
LETTER

FROM A  
GENTLEMAN

IN THE  
COUNTRY

TO HIS  
**Friend in the City :**

TOUCHING  
Sir *WILLIAM PETTY*'s  
Posthumous Treatise ;

ENTITLED,  
*Verbum Sapienti* : Or, The Method of Raising  
Taxes in the most equal Manner, &c.

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Licensed and Entered according to Order.

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# A LETTER

FROM A

Gentleman in the Country

TO HIS

Friend in the City, &c.

SIR,

**I**N Obedience to your Command, I have diligently perused Sir William Petty's ingenious Treatise, Entitled *Verbum Sapienti, &c.* And shall offer you my Sense of it with the utmost Brevity, which the real weight and marvellous variety of Matter admits.

I cannot enough commend the Learned Author's Scope and Design to give us a perfect State of our chiefest Publick Concernments, and that at a time, when we seemed so much to need it: Or, (as in another Case he is pleased himself to term it) *Our Political Anatomy*: Wherein, if any Mistakes or Omissions there seem to be, without doubt the Merit of so noble an Enterprize makes more than double Amends. *In magnis voluisse sat est.*

I may likewise without Complement to him affirm, it is the first considerable Essay of this nature, which I have seen or heard of; and therefore treading in an unbeaten Path, he cannot Err, but very pardonably, so as to challenge our Thanks, rather than incur our Censure. Nor will it, I hope, be any blemish or derogation to so great a Master of Political Measures, as Sir William Petty

is reputed: If one, who, 'tis like, would never himself have thought of a Performance so useful to the Publick, nor could, to be sure, had he luckily stumbled on it, have acquitted himself therein half so well, yet standing, as it were, upon his Shoulders, should pretend in some things to see farther now, than he at the time he wrote could do. For indeed we rightly say, *Bernardus non videt omnia*. And a known Maxim tells us, *Facile est nonnihil inventis addere*.

This Apology premised, I shall, with your Patience, take the Treatise it self in pieces, and cursorily examine it, Chapter by Chapter, both to give his important Discoveries their due Commendation, and note his seeming defects.

In his short, but Solid Introduction, he gives us a general, yet excellent View of our dangerous (not to say monstrous) Disproportions, in point of Taxing: Wisely withal insinuating, how light and even insensible our Burthens equally charged would be, which yet, by many long continued Inequalities, have oft-times proved so heavy, sometimes insupportable. Whereof I shall only say, if herein at all he Err, it is sufficiently on the modest and safer side, in rather palliating, than aggravating our Misconduct on that behalf.

In his First Chapter, he presents us a kind of Particular or Rent-all of our Estate: Examining, as it were, with *Boccaline*, our real Weight. Therein yielding us a fair Occasion of Enquiry, how the Parts agree with the Total; and whether he hath left out nothing, or nothing very material.

It is not my business here to contest with him the just Values of the several Branches specified in his Catalogue. Rather I shall take his Account thereof *de bene esse*, as equally probable with others, which I have met with of the same kind, though different enough, and some of them much greater than his: Such Measures being at best Conjectural, and therefore so various, as hardly two of ten exactly, or to any purpose agree. But I doubt, it will appear, he hath unhappily overseen divers personal Profits and Revenues, in themselves as considerable, as most of those he hath inserted, perhaps more easy, clear, and certain, *viz.* Professions, Offices; Above all, Interest of Money. Which, though they do not, I grant, improve, or enlarge our Fund, (indeed I could wish they did not, at least some of them much impair it,) yet where the principal Aim is professed to be an equal Apportionment of our Publick Contributions, ought to have been placed in the first Rank, and surely should be charged to the full: The rather in my Judgment,



ment, for the very Doubtful Advantage, if not indeed the manifest Préjudice and Incumbrance, which some of them are but too apt to bring us.

The discursive part of his Second Chapter is very useful, and indeed curious; In shewing us, how Industry Co-operates with Nature, for our comfortable Subsistence, and in what Proportions to each other. Our Earnings he seems to rate with his wonted Modesty: However, the mean Estimate he gives them cannot, I think, but imply, they are capable of a large and easie Advancement.

In the Third Chapter he computes and compares the yearly Charges of the Kingdom with its Revenues, as succinctly, yet fairly and probaly, as ever yet I heard them stated.

In his Fourth, he teaches us, how a Million *per Annum*, (at which he seems considerately enough to reckon our whole ordinary Expences,) may be raised with the least Oppression or Burthen. Wherein, no doubt, he were happy even to some Exactness, could we but admit the Ground-work, which he laid in his First Chapter to be free from all Exceptions.

The Argument of his Fifth Chapter, although it may seem notional, and at the first sight, abrupt, is very Pertinent and Substantial. Supposing Six Millions only to be the ready Coin, or running Cash of *England*, he enquires, Whether it suffice for the Circulations or Revolutions of a thriving Trade, and easily resolves it in the Affirmative. Thereby acquainting us, That 'tis not the Species or Quantity, but the due Circulation of Money, which ought to be considered. Since, although we had much less, yet fairly Circulating, we should find no lack of it; or had we much more, it would but stagnate, without a Regular Distribution: In which respect, by the way, methinks, it rather resembles our Blood than our Fat. Now this will lead us to a farther necessary Search, what it is which thus obstructs this due Circulation: Wherein 'twill, I think, appear, that the *annual* Profits or Rents of Land, being the Source, as it were, of all our Payments, or current Dealings in Trade, if instead of the nimble Returns, by our Author supposed, the most, and even the best of our Country Tenants be above a Year behind with their Rents, others at least twice or thrice as long. Too many totally insolvent; Abundance of our greatest Farms, at the same time, either lying waste, or being in the Tenure of hinderly, idle, or ignorant Owners, to little or no Account: whereby probably Land-Rents are now one with another in most

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Countries two or three Years in Arrear, and a great part of them in a manner Desperate. If all this, I say, appear, as surely it doth, and that to the full ; we need not, I trust, resort to a Conjuror, to learn, where the stoppage lies, nor will it require much Skill or Study to find, how only some good Provision for the due Payment of our Land-Rents can now relieve us : And how that is to be Effected, seems also no *Enigma*. Sure I am, not by the sole-Taxing of Land.

Were the Species or Quantity of Bullion a real Cause of Current Payment, or of a Sound Trade, *Spain*, without dispute, would then have the greatest, whereas, God knows, she hath the least Share of it. Which shews us, how fondly some have doated on the Abundance of Coin ; whilst others as weakly have suffered themselves to be imposed on with a silly Sophism, *viz.* the Confounding of those widely different Notions of Money ; As of old it ever was a happy harmless Expedient of Commerce, and as it is unhappily now become a mighty Revenue, or Money Current with Money Lent. The former, I verily believe, in respect of the latter, being not One to Thirty, perhaps much more : And by our Judicious Author's Estimate, compared with our whole Effects, less than One to a Hundred.

In his Sixth Chapter, he undertakes to shew us the Causes of our Irregular Taxing ; whereof he there alledges divers specious ones, and aptly enough enforces them ; which, I grant, may all of them more or less have contributed, or at least given colour to it. Though truly, were my late worthy Friend, Sir *William Petty*, living, I could not chuse but take him aside, whisper softly in his Ear, and only ask him, If in good earnest he thought, That at the time when he wrote, there might have been no other Causes assigned, *viz.* no dark Interests, or rather rank Combinations, of some, point-blank to favour themselves in their immediate Payments ; of others, to keep the Land at an under-rate, till they had made their intended Purchases of it : And perhaps of others yet, to close, or at least comply, with the Court-Intrigues, or on other by-respects.

His Seventh tells us of many notable Uses, or collateral Advantages, to be made of the several Methods of Taxing, *viz.* by Customs, by Poll, as well Compound as Simple, by Chimnies, by Excise, by Land-Tax, and by Assessment on the conceal'd Estates, *viz.* Interest-Monies ; which I could heartily wish, he would have taught us his Art, how to render visible, and thereby liable to Taxing, if not with the Custom-house Law, in obliging them, under their utmost Peril of Forfeiture, to unmask and Rate themselves.

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Most of these Uses indeed are worthy of Consideration, though surely in no degree comparable to the matchless Benefit of a mix'd general and comprehensive Rate, (had we once the Blessing to light upon it,) which should bring almost every individual Shoulder, or at least every Rank, to bear its equal Share of all our Burthens. A State, having once got this great Receipt, hath, as it were, found its *Elixir*. And yet the Learning of it, I must tell you, seems to require, rather a towardsly Disposition, than a large Capacity, there being so fair a Pattern of it at hand, in our Neighbourhood. If by our Author's Measures, we could well bear the yearly Charge of four Millions: By this, I dare say, we might, with less Hardship, at least Ten or Twelve.

In his Eighth, he gives a full Account, what great things are to be done at the Expence of 3300000 *l*. And so by moderate Calculation, without any extreme Pressure or Grievance of the People: To all which, for ought I see, no Exception can be justly taken.

In his Ninth he produces five effectual Motives, for the persuading of us to bear even our highest Taxes, (he means, I suppose, should they be never so unequally laid,) with discreet Submission. Of which, no doubt, all true English-men would in this juncture cheerfully secure him, if any could warrant them, no publick Calamity, or horrible Inconvenience, *viz.* by Famine, or at least general Impoverishment and Insolvency, shall in a short time ensue from such insupportable Burthens.

His last Chapter hath many considerable Hints: And had he but done us the Favour to set us in a right way, how we shall augment, indeed multiply the Product of our Lands, (as by many modern Improvements even at the time he wrote, we had fairly begun, and daily further proceed to do beyond our Neighbours, as well as Ancestors,) without the rendering of it Dog-cheap, to the Ruine of Farming, and with it, in time, all honest Endeavour; he would therein, not only have consummated our worldly Felicity, but crowned his whole Work.

As for the mighty Success he promises, with the prudent Direction he gives us, for Employing all our Hands, I can only say, Till the monstrous Block of Fomenting Sloath it self, with the noblest of Privileges, an absolute Exemption from Taxes, and feeding it with the Spoil of Industry, be removed, 'tis altogether hopeless, but will be then as needless: Wise Nature requiring of us only her Freedom from all Constraint or Restraint, and almost as ill brooking to be Prompted, as Forced or Checked.

But upon the whole Matter he hath given us, though not a perfect, at least the usefulest Map of our Country, that in my Judgment hath been hitherto made. He hath fairly set before us both our Strength and Weakness, our Advantages, together with our Defects. He hath taught us a sort of Learning we mainly wanted, *viz.* the Skill of Taxing, and withal Living. I hope, by Measure, in relation to what we are really worth. In sum, He hath laid us the Ground-work of a noble Fabrick; and if those, who shall hereafter attempt to build thereupon, (as I doubt not many good Wits, as well as publick Spirits, will endeavour,) acquit but themselves half like *Sir William Petty*, we may soon expect to see a Mausoleum. Yet as excellent Pictures have always at first their rough or dead Draughts, and no work of the greatest Moment was ever at once, or perhaps at twice or thrice consummated; He hath withall made some Blots or Oversights, such as, in good troth, I scarce expected from so rare an Artist.

He should, I humbly conceive, have taken his Flight or Rise from a Previous Discourse on the vast Consequences of equal or unequal Taxing. It may perhaps here be said, The very Title of his Treatise imports no less: And besides, he hath therein scattered divers pertinent Reflections of that Tenour. Yet the Matter, I take it, would well have borne, indeed deserved his express and accurate handling of it: Wherein most apply, as well as evidently, he might have shewn, how all Nations have from time to time declined or flourished, in proportion to their due or undue Methods of Contribution: How to the latter of these may be fairly imputed most of the famous Revolts of Provinces, Enthrallments of Free Countries, violent Changes of Government, with other Calamities, and even Depopulations, which we meet with in our Chronicles. How from the same Root have likewise sprung the foulest Corruptions of Manners, with the most Notorious Scandals: It manifestly disposing, if not rather exposing, one part of any People to all the Enormities attending vast Superfluity; the other to the dishonest Shifts and Practices of an indigent Fortune. Whereby, betwixt the vain Pomp, with the Luxury and Arrogance of such, as swimming in Wealth, yet contribute little or nothing to the Publick; and the lamentable Distresses, irreconcilable Grudges, indeed deadly Feuds of those, who under their straight Circumstances, bearing in effect the whole Burthen, find themselves thereby suddenly supplanted, and many of them reduced from a Plentiful Estate to Beggary with Contempt; All Vertue must needs expire, all Vices enter with a Torrent: And there

there is neither Mischief nor Crime, to which this Oppression, where it is extream, or of long Continuance, may not with colour enough be entitled. If I be not much deceived, our present Rates further pursued, will in a short time leave us as little Goodness, or real Worth, as Wealth.

I look it should here be objected, That the very Language of Equal Taxing, is merely *Platonick* and *Utopian*; That there never was, will, or can be, any such thing reduced to Practice, no not of old in the purest State of *Rome*, or now in *Holland*, or *Switzerland*. That it sounds Seditious, and is only fit for Demagogues, therewith to incense the Mob. To which give me leave to answer with this sincere Protestation, that I never once so much as dream'd of any perfect Equality, well knowing, that in all such Cases there would be fair Grains of Allowance for Practical Miscarriages. But still, in Gods name, let them be only Grains, not Ounces, and much less Pounds. To this our ingenious Author, no doubt, would readily have subscribed. And surely were our Disproportions but double, (however inconsistent even that must be with a thriving Commonwealth,) yet few, I dare say, would now even murmur. I freely answer for One.

2. I could not easily, without seeing, have believed; That in such an Enquiry, one of our Author's Nostrials should hardly mention Interest Money, save in some sort to excuse or extenuate its Oppression, as also that he should write with so little concernment of our sole Land-Taxes. But am thoroughly scandalized, he should so forget his own dear Art of Arithmetick, in his wrong Measures of them. He tells us, forsooth, In a Monthly Land-Tax of seventy thousand Pounds, Landlords pay two Shillings in the Pound: which is sure a strange Misreckoning in all but Ground-Rents; seemingly founded on the Erroneous Supposal, that all our Land-Rents are such. Whereas one would think, it should now require small Skill in Accounts, as well as little Experience, to know, That allowing for heavy Repairs, with other endless Charges, incident to all Estates in the Country, there must needs be paid to such a Land-Tax at least four Shillings in the Pound, not perhaps of Rents reserved, yet doubtless of such as are received *de claro*. For I dare affirm, take our Landlords round, they pay thereunto much more than double, considering, how many of the prime Nobility and Gentry, owing great Sums, pay their Creditors Taxes, as well as their own; How many again having Estates far remote from their Dwellings, through their Farms lying Vacant, or Tenants failing, in many Years see little of Rent, yet hardly avoid the Payment of



all Sesses, as well Parochial as Publick. Not to mention the marvellous Variety of our Marsh or Fenny Grounds, our mean Candle-Rents, our Wind mills and Water-mills, with abundance of others, obnoxious either to deadly Casualties or heavy Charges, and oft-times to both. So that, by as current Estimates, as most of these our Author offers, it seems highly probable, the Monthly Assessment even of seventy thousand Pounds, to speak modestly, in most places is not discharged with a full Noble in the Pound of the Liquid Rents of Land.

He admits indeed, a Fourth part of the People bears our whole Burthen, which, to do him right, is much more than hitherto hath been allowed, and would heretofore have passed for a monstrous Paradox. Yet if it be made appear, that 'tis not barely a Fourth, but a Ninth, or Tenth, indeed I dare hardly guess, how small a part of the Nation bears our whole Charge; Though we still must own his Ingenuity, both in discovering and granting to us so much, yet I cannot chuse but reflect on his Over-sight, either in observing or yielding no more.

His Estimate of a Fourth he seems fairly enough to ground upon the Exemption in effect of the whole Commonalty, and of mighty Stocks in Trade. But he strangely passes by both Offices and Professions, which may well be computed near equal to our Land-Rents, as now they are charged: Above all, little notice he takes of Estates concealed at Interest, which in all likelihood, are still, as they long have been, the greater half of our real Fund.

I must needs confess, on my first general View hereof, I thought it next to impossible, that all of these together much less any one of them singly should for Revenue balance our Land-Rents. But discoursing since thereof with Persons of approved Insight and Experience; Besides on a fair Review considering, how on the one side, not only the chief Estates of the Nobility and Gentry have long been, and are still grievously incumbered with Debts, or at least with Portions, but the greatest part of our petty Traders, as well as Farmers, now pay one with another, to speak Modestly, more than Six *per cent*, for the better half of their Wares and Stocks, though few of them, in their several ways of Dealing, can raise near so much: On the other side weighing, how Moneys at Use are notoriously the Provision in effect of all younger Children, the Estate of most Men of Profession or Office, the surest Income of our Ablest, whether Wholesale or Retail Traders, the general Livelihood of our old Men, retired from Affairs, I am now fully convinced, that coming so clear, and being so amply secured, either

ther by Mortgages or Sureties, our Interest of Money must far exceed our Land Revenues, incumbered as now they are, and attended with their unsteady Payments, wretched Securities, and heavy constant Charges, besides all extraordinary Burthens. Whereby, as was said before, it plainly appears to be much more than Equivalent, if not to Land-Rents reserved, yet at least to those received.

That Professions and Offices are also betwixt them near equal to the Land-Rents, seems as reasonable a Measure, as the most of those our ingenious Author hath offered us : That to at least forty or fifty Capital Aids within memory, they have not paid above twice or thrice, is matter of Fact, and that no yearly Profits ought to be more strictly charged than they, methinks speaks it self; By reason of their clear and even daily Income, the constant gradual Encrease of their Customary Fees, with their immediate dependance upon the State, for Privilege and Favor. In which respects, I suppose, among our Adversaries of *France*, they with the Clergy, 'tis said, now bear the main Expence of this heavy War.

Our Prudent Author himself computes our People, with their Labor and Sustainance, to hold much the like Proportion with all our other Effects, as five and twenty doth to fifteen, but treble at least to our Land-Rents : And thence judiciously infers, that they, as well as any, may bear their *Quota* of all publick Burthens, answerable to the Substance of so great an aggregate Body, which, as he likewise aptly shews us, would probably amount to our Wish, in an easie Poll, oft repeated, or gentle Excise well placed, or both. A Proposal now seemingly much enforced by the daily dangerous Growth of Wages, concurrent with the Fall of Provisions and Rents. Were this Nail driven home, it would alone much alleviate the Charge of our Lands : Though still I conceive, only the mixed comprehensive Rate, equally reaching and affecting at least all Ranks, can upon great and instant Occasions render our Burthens easie, or indeed tolerable.

Our Trade is either Foreign or Domestick : The former of these, I would willingly believe, our Author sets at too low a Rate, viz. an Eight part only of our Effects. Sure I am, it should, and easily might be more, or we have too much doated on it, as if it had been our main Support. This in Prudent Governments hath ever been lightly charged for the benefit of Navigation. Indeed it feels even the smallest Imposts, its Hazards being great and many ; And if it cannot ply the Market with the Cheapest, 'twere better



for it to stay at home ; A Grain or Scruple oft-times turning that Scale as well as an Ounce. With Submission therefore, I wish it in great measure discharged, and the Duties elsewhere laid, as with ease enough, for ought I see, they might. But then it would be likewise well balanced, especially with the necessary and obvious Arts of curbing our Sloath and Luxury. For the latter, *viz.* Domestick, and chiefly Retail Trade, why should it not bear its full share of all our Burthens? Though none, I confess, like Interest of Money, with some other Liquid Revenues, which, I dare aver, now to rate them equally, deserve at the least a double Charge. The vast Stocks herein employ'd would without much hardship yield us a fair Supply, to the ease and benefit both of Land and Foreign Trade. Without much hardship indeed: For the Charge, which through the present Mischief of sole Taxing, now crushes the Land, and by Consequence will ere long crush all, were it tollerably divided, would be no more than a Flea-bit to any. Rather on the contrary, there is hardly one well-meaning Person here among us, but would quickly feel the benign Influence of that honest and wise Maxim, *Live and let live*. So as it may well be said, whosoever opposes, grudges, or industriously avoids equality of Taxing, upon the matter aloud declares, he would fire his Neighbor's House, or rather, as far as in him lies, set his Country it self on a Flame, merely to Roast his own Eggs. And to Argue, as still our Sophisters do, that Taxes should not, indeed cannot be equally laid, as it is only *Gratis dictum*, and most abominably selfish, so in this Juncture, I doubt, it Tolls our Pasing bell.

Thus betwixt the Swarms of our People, with the vast Stocks of our Trade, by our ingenious Author specified, Interest of Money, Offices, Professions, &c. now be superadded, all which in our Land-Taxes are not only at present excused, but have, for at least forty Years past, seldom and lamely, God knows, contributed to our almost innumerable heavy Burthens; To me it seems undeniable, that a very small part of the Nation, (how small indeed, is scarce credible) hath all along borne the Charges of the whole. With this severe Aggravation, that the Parties hereby grieved have in effect only been our Industry and our Quality, which should, if any, have been favoured, those excused the Sloathful with the Vulgar. So as we are rather to marvel, we are not already swallowed up, as it were, in a Gulph or Quick-sand, or how we still subsist as a Nation, under so long a Progress of such Hardships than, that at the length, after Civil War, attend

ed with such Rigors, beside much Unfettlement, it hath brought Land-Rents to so low an Ebb, and so sad an After-game; not to be retrieved, I am confident, without the speedy Expedient of a just and general Rate, wherein all our Revenues shall keep even pace with Land. And we may farther fairly conclude, that had it not been for these lurching, indeed Murthering Taxes, our Estates in the main had been long since free from Incumbrance, our Farms well letten, our Rents duly paid, on yearly Advance, and few or no Complaints in our Streets. In Summ, we had doubtless been ere this, with Gods usual blessing on honest and prudent Means, the Envy of all Mankind, and a sort of earthly Paradise: No People under Heaven, all things considered, having naer the like Ingredients of Safety, Plenty and Power, as we.

'Twas in a dark Age, we gave our Monasteries, with other Superstitious Endowments, the odious Nick-name or Brand of Mortmains; Though they generally paid their full *Quotas* in War, and in Peace upon the matter eased us of the vast Charge of our Poor, besides other publick Works. Alas, here are Protestant Mortmains indeed of a larger Size, enough to sink us to the Center, and suddenly turn even this happy *Arabia* into a Desert.

Our want of Publick Spirits is now the common Complaint: But where or how should we look for them? I cannot Divine, what famous Exploits for the Commonwealth, in extraordinary Exigences, we are to promise our selves from such as have all along declined to afford it their ordinary Support or Aid: They should, methinks, scarce pretend to be *Cato's* or *Regulus's*. And for those, who deserving from their Country, perhaps of any the best, are by it treated like Aliens, or rather like Enemies, 'tis fair, I hope, if they be not *Catilines*. Without some Justice on the one side, there is seldom much kindness on the other: We are not over-apt to mourn, at least sincerely, for Stepmothers.

Now though my late worthy Friend, Sir *William Petty*, did not himself fully befriend us with these so important Truths, yet hath he left us a most useful Platform or Scheme of future Taxing: And from his Torch I fairly own to have lighted mine.

3. I could not but hope, The Measures of Domestick Excise would on this Account naturally have occurred to our Author's Enquiry, That he would have dived into the Nature of it, as an Argument most worthy his Scrutiny: So to have taught us, what Commodities may best bear it, and in what Proportions, as also with what Returns. Which for that he hath but lightly touched, waving all such particular Examens, as wholly out of my Sphere,

I shall only in general offer you my present Thoughts, what are the seeming Advantages or Inconveniences, attending this sort of Tax; which being fairly represented, it will be the easier for you to frame a Judgment of it.

Excise, you know, hath obtained a current Repute of perfect Equality: Now though I may by no means admit of that; not only Niggards, but all those, whose Condition obliges them not to live Honourably upon their Demerits, at pleasure avoiding it; yet I must allow, 'tis, singly considered, perhaps the most equal, and Innocent of any particular way of Taxing, commonly proposed or discoursed of; excepting Imposts on some Foreign hurtful Superfluities, for the due regulating of Trade. It hath at first sight a notable Air and Aspect of Freedom, every one being indeed his own Assessor: It rises almost insensibly, bringing the Multitude, (who are more apt to murmur at integral Taxes,) without much Grudging, to pay their Quota's in this. It affects not immediately the Fund of Land, as our sole Land-Taxes mischievously do: And so powerfully doth it recommend, indeed preach Frugality, that, to say the truth, It in a manner condemns all Unthrifts, as, meer Idiots or Lunatics.

But withall 'tis a Mineral, which ought to be corrected, or else with us will turn rank Poyson, and may prove only in some respects a little better than our present sole Land-Taxes; which if they have not already, must soon bring our Noble to Nine-pence: Besides that generally speaking, 'tis a known high Road to Slavery, *Gabelles* and *Sabots* being almost inseparable. The Land would concurrently be otherwise relieved, and in some measure set upon even ground with Trades, Professions and Offices, above all with Use-money, by the most moderate Rate of Interest: Without which, the greatest part of those, who sell either Land or its Product, being still necessitous and under Hatches, will be but too much at the Mercy of their Chapmen, especially of our Interloping Traders, *viz.* Meal-men, Maltsters, &c. to work upon their Exigencies, and not deal with them, unless on Ruinous Terms, at least with full Allowance for the Duty they must pay. Indeed, however expedient or harmless Excise of it self, or in our abstracted Notion of it, may be or seem, it cannot, I fear, without a powerful Allay, be seasonable in a Juncture, when our principal Native Commodities are already so Dog-cheap: Neither were it, I presume, undeserving our serious Thought, How a general Thrift in Household-Expence, (the Famous Consequence of Excise) will comply, or even consist with our Improvements, the doubling of our Product, and its daily growing

growing under-value. Whether at this rate we do not toss and tumble, like a Sick Man, who seeks, as the Saying is, for his Pillow, but cannot find it; or as a squeasie Stomach is apt to change old *Aquavita* for new Brandy.

I do not so much insist on the general Objection of former times, *viz.* the Multiplying of Officers, whereby, besides other dangerous Inconveniences, half the Water is apt to run from the Mill: In hope Expedients may be found for cheap and easie Collection, the only Convenience of Land-Taxes. But in truth the Difficulties of adapting an Excise to mighty urgent Occasions, seem as it were insuperable. For in such case it would prove too Penal, if it should fall very short, and surely no way expedient, should it much exceed. Now who can any thing near compute, how Imposts, when newly laid, or without trial of them, will rise? However they ought, I conceive, to be light: For if heavy, they crush like Mill-stones, where-ever they fall. Upon which account, they surely seem most applicable to a standing Revenue, The mixed and comprehensive Quota, or Tax upon all Abilities, in nature of the Dutch two or three hundredth Penny for all extraordinary Purposes, having, I think, no Fellow.

If it be alledged, That our Landlords, who so long have been oppressed, will hereby at least take Breath, indeed be much eased in their Payments: So, say I, to appearance, is the Tenant in our present Taxes; who yet tells us another Story, by daily woful Experience sinking under them, and fully Sympathizing with the Landlord in all these Hardships. So, I doubt, shall we with our Tenants, in a large Impost on their Commodities. Whereof the Gentry in *France*, who so vainly boast of their Privileges herein, will give us a fair, or rather a foul Account.

But 4. It were to be wished, our Author had discovered to us (as indeed who better could?) the Causes of our wretched Cheapness, although our Crops be never so mean, and our notorious prodigal Expence, even in times of sorest Complaint, for the loss of Rents, Deadness of Trade, and Scarcity of Current Money, together with the necessary Consequences thereof. Which, how Forreign soever at the first sight it may seem to his Arithmetick, yet in treating of Political Measures, would no doubt have been as pertinent, at least as useful, as any thing he hath, or could have handled. Now for the fatal Cheapness oppressing us, as well now, as when he wrote, there is, methinks, no great Mystery in it. Five times, I think, within Memory, hath the like Scandalous want of Vent for all the Product of Land signally afflicted

us; yet never, unless in times of sole Land-Taxes; which plainly points out to us, as with a Finger, whence it proceeds, *viz.* from the over-taxing of Landlords, and so disabling them liberally to take off the Farmers Commodities towards their Rent, to spend them, as their worthy Ancestors did, in generous House-keeping upon the Place, much in the nature of still laying the Compost upon the Farm: For want whereof Poor Tenants are now generally forced to ply remote Markets, and chiefly that of our great Metropolis; which being thus cloid, they must, as before was said, sell at the Discretion of Crafty Interlopers. That this is singly the case, The universal Complaint, as well in all those Junctures, as at present, of too many Gentlemens abandoning the Country, or living but obscurely in it, I hope, enough evinces.

Indeed how should it be otherwise? For admitting, all things computed, *viz.* Want or Insolvency of Tenants, Charges of Managery, Vast and Cumberfome Repairs, with the many other Defalcations now incident to Estates, that they one with another receive hardly half their Revenues, (and well I may say, would to God they could promise themselves so much, even those few that are out of Debt,) How should any of them with long Trains subsist, much more provide for Posterity, except they contract their Household Expences, even to the undoing of their Tenants, as well as their own Eclipse.

If an inconvenient Rate of Interest, though it seemed immediately to concern only the Parties in Debt, who before the Civil War were few in Comparison, could yet so miserably embase our Native Commodities, as, that then it did, at large appears by the Famous Preamble of the Statute made for Reducement thereof, 21 *Jacobi*, Reciting, "That it then caused a very great Abatement in the value of Land, and all the Merchandises, Wares and Commodities of this Kingdom, that it disabled Men to pay their Debts, and continue the Maintenance of Trade, that it enforced them to sell their Lands and Stocks at very low Rates, to forsake the use of Merchandise and Trade, and to give over their Farms, and so become unprofitable Members of the Commonwealth, &c. How much more such a horrid Rate of Taxes, universally charged on the Land, as on that behalf must needs amount to much more than the disabling of our Interest? Sure I am, heavy Imposts on Native Commodities have by long Experience ever brought them to be meer Nuthes; even as in Forreign Trade, they likewise are reputed little less than Counterbands.

For our Luxury, both then and now, to be sure, alike unreasonable, it were not hard to shew, that all such Excess proceeds from Causes almost as natural, as Snow, Rain, or any Meteor, The Ringleaders thereof being apparently those, who with their conceal'd Estates have all along gone Scot-free, and chiefly the Female Sex. Indeed cheap living sufficiently prompts the Poor, Wanton Emulation the Richer sort; Disproportion of publick Rates enables and disposes many to lead, but in pure Self-defence obliges, and even provokes far more to follow all Extravagant Modes. *Sic vivimus ambitiosa paupertate omnes.*

They have a common Saying in *France*, that how grievous soever the Taxes, or hard the Times be, there is still Money stirring enough to be Drunk and Fine. Now Gallantry and Debauch are known to consist in meer Superfluities, and those chiefly, or rather only, Forreign. Nothing of our own, whether Growth or Manufacture, is in those cases at all esteemed: Nor doth any of our Fair Ladies take her self to be well dressed in Woollen, or our Sparks well treated with Homespun Liquors. How many, through the deadly Cheapness of all our Native Commodities, can now afford to drink Wine, wear Velvet, and eat Anchovies, who, did but Household Provisions bear a due Rate, would be, as their Predecessors were, proud of honest Stuffs, glad of good Small Beer, with Ale or Strong Drink on Holidays, and content with Sprats? So clearly doth our Riot and Cheapness Feed and Foment each other; which might, one would think, naturally guide us to the ready Cure of both, only by not oppressing the Land.

What are the direct Consequences of them, can hardly need either Proof or Illustration. I am but too sensible, How the Vulgar ever doated on Cheapness, as the very Fewel of their Sloath. They call it Plenty, nay Mannah it self; and wonder any should construe it otherwise than they do, *viz.* for a Sovereign Blessing. Whereas all that either think or read must know, Dog-cheapness, and the general low Values of the Product in any Country, are, and have ever been reputed a kind of Plague-Tokens, an Epitome of Miseries, above all Peremptory to publick Freedom, indeed an immediate Inlet to Despotick Empire. That the very sound of them is the same with Beggary; they plucking up Industry all at once by the Root, especially that of the Plow. For instance whereof, we need not go so far as the *East* or *West Indies*: Not only *France*, but *Ireland* affording us notable Patterns of it at our very Doors. That to consummate our sad Prospect of them, They manifestly tend to, and generally end in utter Famine:



Witness that ever Memorable *Egyptian* Plenty, the clear result whereof was, That they, who one Year fold their Corn for a Song, the next, or at least soon after, fold themselves for Corn.

The dismal Effects of Luxury are a common place, wherewith all Classick Authors superabound; *Sævior Armis Luxuria; Plus Gula quam Gladius*, &c. Yet how Fatal and Enormous soever, It is and hath always been a Plausible, nay a very Popular Evil. To say all herein at once, It commonly fares with Nations alike as with Families; whilst fair Estates are in the spending, there is ever wonderful Plenty; nothing to be seen or heard, but Merriment. The Master of the House, (or as some love to call him, Founder of the Feast,) is celebrated for his generous Hospitality, nay even worshipped, at least whilst it lasts, as a general Benefactor: The Mistress, with all her Children, are in perfect good Humour, indeed in Fools Paradise: The Steward, to be sure, well licks his Fingers, probably makes his Fortune: All the Domesticks live for the time at their perfect ease, in a kind of Golden Age. But alas a long and severe Lent is in both respects still at the heels of this short lived Carnival.

Many like happy Discoveries or Enquiries of equal Moment, I not only wished, but hoped from Sir *William Petty's* approved Ingenuity: Of all which, I may hereafter Discourse with you, at your good leisure and mine. Wherefore, not now to load you with a Volume, instead of an Epistle, I beg your Pardon for my present Trespas, and in great Friendship always remain, Sir,

Your most Affectionate Humble Servant

H. J.

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
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
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
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